

Why Stop Me?

Innocent individuals may be offended or angered because an officer has stopped them. Although the delay might be inconvenient, the officer usually has a good reason.

- You might be walking in the vicinity of a recent crime.
- Your clothing maybe similar or identical to that worn by someone suspected of a crime, or you may match the description of a person suspected of a crime.
- The officer may be looking for a potential witness to assist in an investigation.
- The officer may think you need assistance.
- Someone may have called the police complaining that you look suspicious.
- You might be acting in a manner that the officer considers suspicious.
- Likewise, there are various reasons why the police officer might stop you while you are driving.
- The officer may want to warn you about a potentially dangerous situation.
- The vehicle you are driving may have an equipment violation.
- The vehicle you are driving may match the description of a vehicle used in a criminal act.
- You may have committed a traffic violation.



This pamphlet is intended as a guide only. If you feel officers has acted inappropriately, or feel that you have been treated unfairly, politely ask the officer questions to clarify; but do not argue the issue. Once the incident is over and the officer has left the scene, you may call one of the numbers below during regular business hours.

Chief and Captain

Chief Melvin Harris
256-726-7374

Capt. David Clarke
256-726-7477

Complaints may be filed after hours by contacting a field supervisor at 256-726-7375

Oakwood University Police Department

**7000 Adventist Blvd NW
Huntsville, AL 35896
Phone: 256-726-7371
Fax: 256-726-7441**

IF YOU ARE STOPPED BY THE POLICE



Every year in the United States, more than a hundred police officers are killed in the line of duty and thousands more injured or assaulted. For this reason, police officers place a great deal of emphasis on officer safety and survival. Certain safety practices are installed in police officers from the first day of their careers.

Although these procedures maximize officer safety, they may seem standoffish, impolite, or offensive to law abiding citizens who may not considered such precautions necessary. Although a citizen may not have any intention of doing harm, police officers usually maintain a defensive posture until they feel there's no risk of confrontation or injury.

If You Are Pulled Over

As far as police officers are concerned, there is no such thing as a routine traffic stop. Every stop has the potential for danger. Following these guidelines will help put the officer at ease:

- Safely pull over to a place out of the flow of traffic as soon as the police officer activates the emergency lights.
- If there does not appear to be a safe place to pull over immediately, signal your intention to pull over and proceed safely to a safe or a well-lit area.
- Remain in your vehicle. Exiting your vehicle does not assist the officer and may be perceived as a threat.
- Stay calm and keep your hands visible on the steering wheel.
- If you have passengers, ask them to sit quietly with her hands visible.
- Avoid sudden movements or ducking in the seat: these actions can unnecessarily alarm the officer.
- If it is dark, turn on your inside lights when you pull the car over. This will reduce the officer's concern about possible threats from within the vehicle.
- Communicate your actions in advance by telling the officer what you will be doing before you move.
- If requested, you must give the officer your driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance. Tell the officer where they are before you reach for them.



If the officer asks you to step out of your vehicle, comply in a calm matter. Give the officer approximately 2 to 3 feet of personal space as a safety zone to do his or her job.

If you are issued a citation, you'll be asked to sign it. Signing is not an admission of guilt, but the acknowledgement that you have received citation. Innocence can only be determined in court.

If You Are Stopped on the Street

- Do not run from the officer.
- Be courteous and truthful.
- Take your hands out of your pockets and keep them out.
- If you have a CCW permit and are carrying a firearm, inform officer immediately.
- Do not make sudden moves.
- Follow instructions the officer gives you.
- If the officer is going to pat you down, inform him or her of any weapons or sharp objects they may encounter, but do not reach for them.
- Don't argue with the officer about his stated reason for approaching you.
- Answer the officer's questions to the best of your ability.
- Don't get in the way if an officer is taking someone you are with into custody. You could be arrested for interfering.



When an Officer Comes to Your Door

Whenever police officers come to your door, they should willingly identify themselves and state their purpose for being there. Usually it is for one of the following reasons:

- To interview you or a member of your household concerning an incident that is being investigated.
- To respond to a call for service.
- To make a notification.
- To serve an arrest warrant.
- To serve a search and seizure warrant.



An arrest warrant commands the officer to arrest the person named in the warrant. You may see a copy of the arrest warrant. A search warrant can be served anytime, day or night. Police officers with a search warrant will knock and announce their presence unless emergency circumstances exist. A search warrant can be served without the owner present.

Police may also search without a warrant whenever arresting individuals. They may search the individual under arrest, the area near the arrest, and the room where the arrest was made if inside the home. Police may also search when there is an emergency (for example someone screaming for help inside your home), or when chasing you or someone else inside of your home.